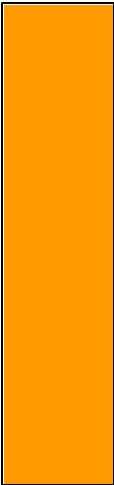

***Job*Interview**

S • E • C • R • E • T • S

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TAKING THE MYSTERY OUT OF THE INTERVIEW

Let me take the fun out of watching movies for you and then I'll demonstrate how this will help you in an interview.

I remember sitting in a movie recently and thinking, this thing cost \$160 million to make. That's about \$1.5 million for each minute of film – so that shot of the big pair of scissors going into the bedside table has to be important, because it cost about \$750,000 to make.

Sure enough, the killer arrives later in the film and our defenseless heroine gets attacked at home in her bed; at the last moment she manages to grab the scissors and plunge them into the killer's heart.

Now every time I see a big budget movie, and every time I see a lingering shot on some seemingly inconsequential object, I know it is the KEY to the outcome of the movie and it ruins the whole film for me... which is why I spend time writing books like these and have no life.

Curiously, I noticed the same thing happens in interviews. Like most movies, interviews are predictable and you can easily guess the outcome. The crucial difference is that in an interview, YOU can control the direction.

You get called in to an interview because your potential employer is scared, untrusting and doubtful – about YOU.

They're scared that you can't really do the job and that they will get the blame for hiring you in the first place.

They're untrusting of things you've said in your resume. After all, you never see a resume where the applicant says: *I'm a very average programmer, waiter or manager.*

And they're doubtful that you will stay, or work hard, or work for a manager who is threatened by anyone smarter, older or more talented than they are.

Knowing this nearly makes the interview too easy and takes the fun out of it for you.

Every question you get asked will be probing to uncover and confirm their worst fears. You just need to prepare yourself in advance and get ready with examples to prove you are what you say you are.

Most interviewees come unstuck because they get caught unawares by a question. This, in my mind, is just bad planning. The interviewer knows you didn't leave your last job because you were paid too much, found the work too easy and all your fellow employees were your BEST friends. Something went wrong – maybe you were FIRED... In comes the fear.

So they ask questions like:

“Why did you leave your last job?”

You don't have to be a genius to see that one coming.

There is no “black and white” in an interview. The best person does not always get the job.

Someone who “works long hours until the job is done” may be an ideal candidate for the job, or someone who is bad at managing their time.

A talent for “thinking outside of the box” would get you fired for “not being able to follow work directives” at one company I used to consult for.

Potential employers also know that you promise the world in your application letters to get the job, but it won't be long before you're complaining about management and that your pay sucks. That sounds harsh, but think of the stuff

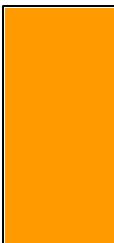
you said in your interview for your last job and now you're leaving – what happened there?

You may also be offered a “competitive pay” rate. So the question is, should you work as hard as you can, or just back it off to a more *competitive* level?

There is a lot more at stake than a job. This report shows you how to take control of an interview and make it easy for your potential employer to hire you – or not.

After all – you want to make sure that you're going to like working for your potential employer.

So let's begin...



THE INTERVIEW CRYSTAL BALL

Imagine having a crystal ball that could show you, in advance, the sort of questions and issues your interviewer is going to cover. It would sort of be like having the questions to a test before you do the test. Luckily for you this crystal ball exists.

It's the job ad or posting.

Let me show you how easy it is to turn a job ad or posting into a map of for your interview.

SALES MANAGER

We need an executive level manager with proven marketing, training and supervision experience for around 15 sales staff for a leading Widget manufacturer. Extensive experience acquiring major accounts with sales of up to \$5 million annually. Duties include: Overseeing contract negotiation and customer relations. Hiring and supervising office staff. Managing accounting, budgeting and sales reporting.

Proven ability to minimize bad debts and implement credit/ collections procedures. Plus a external sales background covering a multi state area. M.B.A. preferred. \$45,000 to \$60,000.

Questions That May Be Asked About The Ad

- Can you give me an overview of your Sales Management experience?
- Can you describe your experience acquiring major accounts?
- Tell me about your background in marketing widgets or a similar product.
- Have you been responsible for managing and training staff?
- What experience do you have overseeing contract negotiation and customer relations?
- We can't afford a high cash to debt ratio. Can you describe your experience in this area?
- Have you managed sales and marketing in multiple states?
- We're looking for an M.B.A. Do you have that sort of qualification?
- The salary range is from \$45,000 to \$60,000. What was your previous salary?

Every one of those questions comes from a KEY area mentioned in the job posting.

All you have to do is pull apart the job posting or ad for the position you're interviewing for and then ask yourself questions about the KEY things they're looking for.

You can work out in advance how to tackle areas that you may be lacking in. If you don't have a degree and they require one, you better start thinking of your skills or experiences which compensate for that. The fact you have the interview means they are willing to look at alternatives to a degree – so be prepared.

Study your resume for facts and figures to answer these questions. Now is a good time to see how your resume can work both against you and for you in an interview.



BACK-UP YOUR RESUME

The reason you have the interview is because of what your potential employer saw in your resume or cover letter.

Part of the purpose of asking you questions is to hear more about your past and, more importantly, to make sure the person that your resume describes is the person sitting in front of them.

For example:

Suppose someone's resume said something like this:

Managed large restaurant with gross sales of \$3,000,000 and a staff of 25. Developed strong team, increasing sales 15% in the first year and winning an American Express Award.

Impressive stuff. So if, as an interviewer, you asked this person a question like:

"How long have you been a manager for?"

You're going to get pretty disappointed if they simply replied:

"Only one year."

While the answer may be technically correct, it does nothing to back up what is being said in the resume.

Watch how incorporating the resume entry into the response dramatically enhances the image of the candidate and backs-up what is said in the resume as well:

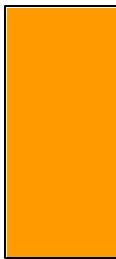
"I've been manager of xyz restaurant for about a year now... and in that time my team and I have achieved some amazing things, like increasing sales by 15%.

Can I tell you about that and how that may apply to you and your business?"

Not only does this answer sound like the approach you'd expect from someone who has achieved these sorts of things, but it has taken the focus OFF a relative lack of experience (only 1 year) and put it on to something an employer LOVES: increasing sales.

So if you combine this chapter's suggestions with the previous chapter's ideas, you can create fantastic answers to interviewer questions that back-up your resume and greatly enhance your impact on the potential employer.

This is also part of the key to getting more money when it comes time to salary negotiations. The more valuable they perceive you to be, the more they will offer you to join them. But I'm getting ahead of myself.



RESEARCH PAYS OFF

I have a friend who spends hours each day researching companies on the internet to find “winners” to add to his share portfolio.

He looks at everything: cash to debt ratios, new product developments, press releases, shareholder information, etc.

He probably knows more about these companies than most of the employees – or potential employees, come to think of it.

My point is this. The internet is full of websites for companies large and small. On these websites you can find all sorts of information that helps you understand your potential employer. You can use this information to make you STAND OUT from the crowd by bringing it up in the interview.

Saying something like: “I see you’ve just been awarded a patent for your xyz technology, you must be proud of that”, not only shows you have done some research, it makes you look like someone who *wants* to work for the company and is not simply looking for any old job.

Remember that the interview process is a battle of perception and is not simply limited to facts and figures.

As one executive chef described it to me:

We have won nearly every award possible when it comes to restaurants. So one question I ask a chef who wants to work for us is: WHY? Why do you want to work for us? If they don't mention our awards in their response then I instantly know they simply want a job. Responses like "My wife and I want to relocate to this area" simply leave me cold. There's nothing in that response for ME.

One click to our website and you'd see all our awards plus customer comments and reviews on our restaurant. I want someone who wants to be part of all that and can help us continue our reputation into the future.

Makes sense to me.

So spend some time researching the company and get to know everything you can about what makes it tick.

While you're searching the internet, find other companies that do similar things and send them a letter as well. You never know what could come out of that.

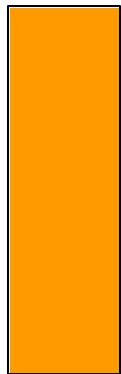
Employers are always on the look-out for good staff. You'd be surprised at how often they would like to get rid of a bad staff member, but need impetus to do that. Often that impetus is a good candidate or application turning up on the doorstep at the right moment.

Employers are tuned into a special radio station called WII-FM:

What's In It For ME.

They don't really care about your past, skills or experience... all they want is to see what those things can do for THEM.

The purpose of this report is to help you *tune in* to that and make it easy for an employer to hire you. Have a think about this and how most people approach the interview with a 'what can the company do for me' attitude.



TURNING THE INTERVIEW UPSIDE-DOWN

Conventional wisdom says that you go to an interview to answer questions. That's the problem with conventional wisdom – it's easy and convenient. Therefore, bookstore shelves are creaking under the weight of books with titles like *100 Easy Answers to Tough Interview Questions*. Easy and convenient if you can remember all the questions and the appropriate answers, or if you can take the book to the interview with you – not likely.

The good news for you is that *so many* people read these books and stress over trying to remember the answers, so it opens the door for you to really STAND OUT in the interview.

If you get invited to an interview, the job is essentially yours. They wouldn't waste time talking to you if they didn't think you could do the job. But as we've discussed briefly, they have a few fears and doubts, namely:

- 1: Your resume is too good to be true and you won't be able to do the job.
- 2: You won't stick around.
- 3: You don't play well with others.

So, when you think about it, most interview questions are designed to EXPOSE the real you and see if you are going to let them down in one or more of those three areas.

They know that everyone looks good on paper, and no-one ever says they are average at what they do!

Plus or minus 10%, you have the same skills or experiences as the other people they will be interviewing. And these other people have probably read all the generic "Interview Questions" books, so they're busy rehearsing their answers to the expected questions.

So when an interviewer fires the question "**Where do you see yourself in five years' time?**" the other applicants are giving answers straight from the books or what they think an employer wants to hear: talking about loyalty and showing ambition, etc. But imagine the interviewer's surprise if you answered:

"I want to be exactly where I am when I start with you. It's your job to make sure I don't get promoted!"

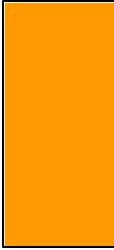
Want to know why? So would the interviewer (I cover this strategy further in the chapter : *Talent... Using It To Your Advantage*), but talk about a conversation starter and making you stand out from the crowd!

Before you know it, an answer like that leads to more questions and any doubts about you suiting the position are soon gone.

Other factors to remember in order to stand out from the crowd are:

- 1: You need to ask questions.
- 2: You need to know why these guys are in business.
- 3: You need to ease their fears and doubts about you.

All these issues and more are covered in the following pages, and you don't need to remember any lines or second-guess the employer – just be yourself and use your new-found interview skills to SELL yourself to your potential employer.



PHONE INTERVIEWS

How you get the interview can make a real difference to the whole interview process.

So many people are relying on the internet and job boards to get interviews and then hopefully jobs, that just getting to the interview is a saga. Competition is fierce, recruiters are jaded and all those resumes just blur into a mass of hype, facts and some fiction.

If you get an interview for an advertised job, you can be pretty darn sure that the job is potentially yours. Your resume has been compared to all the others, probably scanned for keywords, and you've passed. To see if you are worth interviewing, you may get a PHONE CALL.

Everything you read in this book can be applied to phone interviews, but there are a few things distinctive to phone interviews that I want to bring up now.

If you've set up a time for a phone interview, be prepared. Organize someone to look after the kids and prepare a work space around your phone. That's pretty simple.

But sometimes they call when you're not expecting it. Be prepared for that!

One of our readers received a call for a phone interview and asked the employer if he could call them back in 5 minutes as he wasn't prepared. They told him he could.

He rang back and sure enough the line was busy – they were conducting more phone interviews. Eventually when he did get through, they told him they had made their choices and he'd simply missed out!

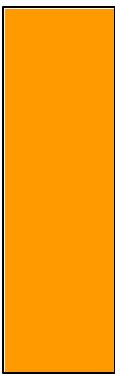
Unless you live a long way away from your potential employer, the phone interview is designed to confirm that the facts in your resume are true. Answer their questions but keep in mind this sort of interview is more of a "fishing expedition", so don't go in with all your interview guns blazing, so to speak.

You will probably find the person doing a phone interview is not the hiring manager and is simply crunching through a list to compile a name of candidates for a physical interview.

If you have applied for jobs on the internet, it's a good idea to *print the job descriptions out* and put them near the phone. That way if you get the call, you can remind yourself of the exact criteria they were looking for. This tip was given to us in our job seeker forum after one reader's friend received a phone interview and asked the caller if they were from company x, y or z... Not the smartest thing to start the phone interview with, perhaps?

Part of qualifying you for a physical interview may be to tell you the starting salary is \$x0,000 and asking if you are still interested.

DO NOT start your salary negotiations on the phone, nor indicate you will accept their offer. Simply say: "I'm still interested in the position." That way you can use our salary negotiation techniques when the appropriate time comes up in a physical interview.



TALKING THE SAME LANGUAGE

I have to tell you that so many people are busy working in their jobs they don't really understand the function of what they do.

They think they're simply, for example, programmers or accountants or administration assistants. But every position in a company is part of a cog for a machine that has a very specific purpose. Interestingly, each job uses language which is very different to that of management. These two factors make for an interesting dilemma...

If you can imagine trying to sell something when you don't know what it really does – AND – you use terms or expressions your customers don't identify with – you get a good idea on why most people fail in an interview.

This interview question highlights this pretty well:

“Why are we in business?”

While some applicants will be fumbling around trying to remember the answer to this question, one will get it partly right: "To make MONEY!". While that answer is technically correct, it's too raw and misses the bigger picture. Also, you don't hear business owners describe their businesses as crudely as "we make money".

A business's purpose and function revolves around:

- 1: Getting MORE customers
- 2: Getting customers to buy or pay MORE (or increasing profit per sale)
- 3: Getting them to do this MORE often.

Your job contributes in some way to one or all of those things. Employers look through your resume to find evidence of this, which leads to interviews.

In the interview they look for proof that you actually *can* contribute to these business functions – and that includes the words you use.

Employers use words like *market share*, *return on investment*, *customer satisfaction*, and *competitive advantage* which are part of the language for describing the processes of getting more customers selling them more, and getting them to do it more often.

Using these sorts of words or talking about those sorts of things in an interview not only makes you stand out from the crowd but helps you talk the same language with your potential employer. For example:

The accountant who demonstrates that the bills got paid, the books balanced, investors were happy and their good financial skills freed-up cashflow to expand the business... **talks the same language.**

The housekeeper who shows they go the extra mile for guests, clean rooms quickly and efficiently, leading to earlier check-ins and availability for guests which gets the guests telling their friends about the hotel and the hotel winning awards... **talks the same language.**

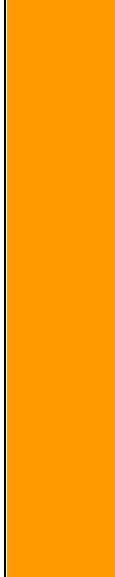
The software developer who has coding talent with a track record of making products easy to use and easy to sell... **talks the same language.**

You may work for a non-profit organization, or your job may fall outside of the broad net I just cast. Remember that non-profit organizations depend heavily on funding and donations – so how do you contribute to that?

Similarly, some companies depend on shareholders for their funding – so how does your job contribute to that?

You don't have to have all the answers – asking some strategic questions and using new concepts you're learning here will soon have your potential employer *giving* you the answers *they're* looking for.

Let's read on...



TALENT: USING IT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

What TALENT are you looking for?

The big trend emerging right now is interviewing for TALENT. It seems that business is finally understanding that a huge part of its assets lie between the ears of its employees.

With that in mind, companies are looking beyond skills and experience in interviews because they know it's a bell curve – that plus or minus 10%, most of the people they will be interviewing have similar skills or experience.

The thing that separates the good from the bad is going to be TALENT. Luckily for us, there are two key points to remember in making this TALENT strategy work for us.

Key Point #1: There are truck-loads of HR people and interviewers out there who haven't a clue how to interview for talent. We'll soon use that to our advantage.

Key Point #2: Discovering YOUR talent makes you stand out from the crowd – yet again.

This whole TALENT concept is best demonstrated with the following true story.

One reader who wrote to us had an incredible career in sales. His resume was awesome – sales in the tens of millions, and he opened new territories nationally and overseas. If you wanted to sell a new product in a new territory, this was your guy to do it. He had a TALENT for bringing in NEW business.

Then one day a new sales manager was appointed and our super-salesman was taken out of the field and given some existing clients to look after. It wasn't long before one of these clients complained to the new manager about our super-salesman constantly calling up wanting to sell them stuff. This client wanted a relationship with the company, not high pressure sales. So the manager in his wisdom FIRED our super-salesman.

Basically, the manager was an incompetent ex-salesman who didn't appreciate the talent he had around him. Our super-salesman's TALENT was opening up new territories and getting new orders.

You don't want a guy like that anywhere near existing customers who need nurturing and relationships – you find a salesperson who has a TALENT for nurturing and building relationships to do that.

You'd leave our super-salesman out in the field bringing in new customers. A manager who has a TALENT for managing TALENT would understand that. (Which leads me to this: people don't quit their job, they quit their manager.)

Here's how you use this to your advantage:

It's now time for you to take control of the interview again. Imagine you're in the interview and you ask:

"You must have a few people with similar sorts of skills and experiences applying here, so let me ask you: what sort of TALENT are you looking for to fill this position?"

Expect to be met with a blank stare when you ask this question, because from my experience most interviewers haven't even thought about it. They were going to weed out good candidates from bad with 101 questions and an IQ test.

Look at a company like Microsoft. If you valued all the stock on hand and the buildings, etc. it would represent a FRACTION of the total market capitalization. This is because shareholders are banking on the talents of Microsoft's management and programmers etc. – yet you don't find these HUMAN assets on the balance sheet.

So when they ask you: "Talent? What do you mean?", you can point out how each job requires skill and experience, but the real difference between success and failure is the TALENT required to make the job a success.

A couple of examples:

A new restaurant may want a talented chef, one who is very creative and can create a menu that puts the restaurant on the map. Another restaurant may do a lot of function work and needs a chef who can knuckle down and work under pressure, churning out quality meals in a minimal amount of time.

Same skills, different TALENTS.

Similarly, a software programmer may be incredibly gifted at de-bugging code and is the GO TO person when you need a bug fixed. Another may be crappy at de-bugging but is a genius at turning the "can't be done" into codable solutions. You want the first person to improve performance of your existing software, and you want the second person to create an innovative software product that leaves competitors in the dust.

A talent doesn't have to suggest you're creative. As in the example of the chefs, the second chef simply had a talent for working hard under pressure.

Talent is the fuel for innovation and talented people are often what makes one company better than another. Their ideas and talents create products or services that leave competitors in the dust. Often a talent for innovation changes the whole industry: look what Amazon books did to the traditional book retail industry.

You need to sit down and think about your talent. Interestingly, we have found that when people get a job that utilizes their talent they are much happier at work, because they are doing something they enjoy and are good at.

So when you ask an interviewer what sort of talent they're looking for, you may need to help them out by explaining you can do the job, but you have a talent for doing X within the job. Or you could give them the example of the chefs and let them figure out what they're looking for.

Now it may turn out that they require someone who has the skills to do the job but they need a talent you don't have: that's fine.

Ideally, you want to get a job where you enjoy going to work and you feel your talents are being put to good use.

Nevertheless, when you start asking questions like these, you get to see the inner workings of the company and create opportunities to show your interviewer and potential employer how your skills, experience and talent can help them achieve their goals for this job.

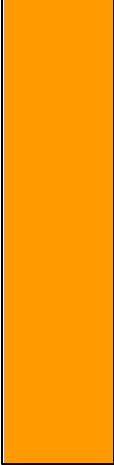
Important Point:

Often you find a person has a talent in one area. After a few years of getting incredible results, the company does what it considers the **RIGHT** thing and promotes the person. So the person goes from being a talented employee into an untalented manager. Managing a programming department and being a talented programmer require totally different skills and talents.

We are starting to see a trend in the workplace of talented employees not being promoted, but kept in the same position and being paid more or getting more perks.

Along these lines, my favourite story is of a doorman who has been the doorman of a popular hotel for 20 years. He loves his job and knows all the regular customers by name. He has a talent for making people feel welcome. The management were smart enough to realise this and instead of promoting him up the corporate ladder, they kept him where he is at his happiest and at his best and pay him at a management level.

So when you're asked "Where do you want to be in five years' time?" tell them you want to be in the job you're applying to – **BUT** – earning more money.



A TWIST ON THE LAST CHAPTER

What outcomes are you looking for with this position?

By now you're starting to see that asking some basic questions means you start to take control of the interview and can spend more time focusing on the KEY issues and concerns.

In the last chapter we spoke about TALENT being part of the success of a company because talent leads to innovation. There is a flipside to this coin and it's also a talent I guess, but in a very different area.

A major frustration with employers is finding people who can EXECUTE strategy.

This is particularly true in large companies trying to make changes in their operations – especially culture changes.

The turn-around of IBM in the '90s comes to mind as a good example. When senior management, led by a new CEO, were making huge changes to turn the company around they had a lot of trouble with managers and department people resisting the changes. So while they had the strategies needed to make IBM profitable again, the process was slowed down in different cases because some people were reluctant to EXECUTE those strategies.

So if you're good at taking directions and delivering outcomes (I guess this is a talent) then you need to find out if this is something they're looking for. The interview is the perfect time to do this.

So with this in mind, perhaps a question for you to ask your potential employer is "What sort of outcomes are you looking for from the position or the department?". Then you can point out that you are great at EXECUTING strategy.

This is perfect for demonstrating that you not only follow orders or directives, but can work as part of a team as well.

So no matter if you're working in a management position or at a lower level, the ability to understand and implement initiatives from higher-up can be paramount to the success of a company.

Interestingly, large companies frequently find it hard to implement culture change because of the resistance of managers or supervisors down the line. Often they have no choice but to move these people on (read: fire them) and bring in people from outside who haven't been infected with the entrenched culture. You need to know if you're going to be part of this process, so ask questions.

Now here's the key regarding this issue:

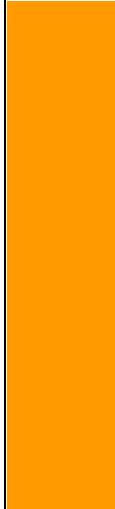
As with all interview scenarios, use your resume or previous work stories/examples to back up what you're saying. You can point them to your resume:

"You may have seen in my resume that at XYZ we turned around the manufacturing process to meet the new challenges from the market."

...OR:

"Can I demonstrate this with an example that isn't in my resume?"

The last two points lead me to another reason why it pays to ask questions in the interview. Let's move on to the next chapter.



OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS AND YOUR PAST

Interviewers ask open-ended questions to encourage you to talk about yourself. Skilled interviewers looking for talent ask open-ended questions because they are looking for your spontaneous answers as a way to predict your future behavior.

As one skilled interviewer explained to me: *"If I ask a question about selling and the candidate keeps talking about his desire to move up the corporate ladder, no matter how much I want to hear them talk about their sales skills and experience, I have to TRUST what they're telling me. In this case, they're more motivated by promotion than selling. It's up to me to work out if that's what we want or not."*

Interviewers' favorite open-ended questions usually start with:

Tell me about a time when ?

Once again they are looking for your top-of-mind response and, more importantly, your SPECIFIC examples: specific times, events or people.

The reason for this is simple. They are looking for examples from your past that can help them predict the future if they hired you. If you have many examples of events that happened that answer the question, then you will EASILY be able to come up with a specific example.

If you were to rattle-off a sentence or three of theory about how important the underlying issue is, they will assume you haven't really done it.

So the interviewers ask open-ended questions to probe for talents they are looking for, and are listening for your top-of-mind responses – they're not necessarily listening exactly to what you're saying but rather, the subtext behind it.

Let me give you an example which will make it clearer.

Suppose you want to recruit a programmer to your company who has a talent for being assertive. During the interview, you would ask a question like:

"Tell me about a time when you overcame resistance to your ideas."

Here are two possible answers:

1: "I believe it's important to be persistent and champion your ideas. My team and I would disagree a lot on the right direction to take but we would support each others' input and work together to come up with a solution, taking into account all input."

2: "It happened last week."

Both answers are good, but answer number 2 is more predictive for the employer of your potential. The spontaneous response was "last week". As an interviewer, you don't know what happened, but the details are less important than the top-of-mind specific response. You didn't ask for a specific, but you got one.

A few more questions will reveal the details of the situation that took place, but you have discovered that *overcoming resistance* to ideas is a way of this person's life.

Answer number 1 is a nice description and a good attempt to tell you what you want to hear but doesn't demonstrate a specific instance. So an interviewer looking for talent would draw the conclusion that this person hasn't had a lot of experience in being assertive because their spontaneous response didn't contain a specific example.

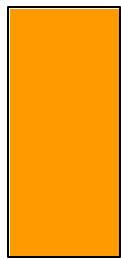
Both answers would require more probing to discover the actual event that took place, but the second answer was more specific and indicates it happens a lot.

So what's the best way to tackle these sorts of questions?

Luckily, the answer doesn't depend on you.

Most interviewers are NOT professionally trained and so will happily be impressed with an articulate response like example number 1 – and they'll be pleasantly surprised and impressed with the answer in number 2.

For you, you should try to answer questions such as these as specifically as you can. Be aware of your own top-of-mind responses, too. You will soon see patterns developing in your own work background. Remember also that answering questions is just part of the process – asking questions is important, too.



THE POWER OF THE MIND

I remember reading this story about an American soldier who when captured by the Viet Cong, used “visualization” to trim 20 or 30 strokes off his golf game.

I'd better explain that.

This soldier spent a few years in a Viet Cong prison and he had nothing to do (except possibly being tortured) so he would mentally play his local golf course in his head every day. He visualized the tees, sand traps and hitting all sorts of shots in different conditions. It turned out that when he eventually made it home, he played a round of golf on this course and beat his handicap by 20 strokes or so.

This kind of mental rehearsal is used by top athletes to go over an event in their minds, preparing themselves mentally for different obstacles that may occur and generally helping them to feel more confident, and familiar, with the event.

Interestingly, this same tactic works in job interviews too.

The interview that landed you your last job probably went pretty much to plan and the questions you thought would come up, did come up.

Take some time to mentally rehearse the interview in your mind. You have just read about spontaneous answers in the last chapter, so go over some typical interview questions and analyze your own top-of-mind responses.

Could you answer the question with an example or did you come up with an articulate response that indicated you thoroughly understood the issue behind the question?

Both sorts of responses are fine but you can use this mental rehearsal to find examples from your work history that you may have previously overlooked.

Get comfortable with the job, the interview and the people in your mind. Think about what you'd be doing in the job if you got it, the sort of challenges you'll face. Mentally rehearsing these things will make you more relaxed and more prepared.

As any book on interpersonal skills will tell you, approximately 90% of our communication is conveyed through non-verbal cues – body language.

Your cover letter and resume have done their part in communicating your skills and experience to the potential employer. The questions the interviewer asks will remove any fear or doubts they have about your resume, skills and experience, but keep in mind that the outcome of the interview depends to a degree on the non-verbal cues that you give and receive.

Many potential employers have not hired perfectly suitable applicant simply because they didn't like the way they looked (the clothes they wore or their body language).

To help you in this area, let's take a quick course in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). Basically, the theory boils down to this:

If your potential employer is using words like: "It looks like..." or "I see that..." or other words that indicate a bias towards VISUAL references, then you should use the same sort of words.

Similarly, if they use AURAL references, such as "it sounds like..." or "I'm hearing..."; or EMOTIVE words such as "I feel" or "I sense"; or LOGIC-based terms of reference such as "I think" or "I'd reason" – mirror them.

This same "mirroring" applies to their body movements. If they move forward when they talk then you should do the same.

We actually do this mimicking unconsciously in our everyday interactions with our friends. Watch two friends talk at a bar and you'll probably notice they sit or

stand the same way and have similar mannerisms. You'll notice that most of your friends talk about things you're interested in and use similar language as you.

You may recall that previously in this report we spoke about the language an employer uses. They don't talk about "overtime", or "time-off" or "bonuses". Those words aren't really part of their language.

They talk about "ROI", "marketshare" and "PE ratios" and so do their friends.

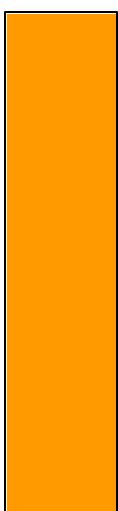
The people in marketing talk a different language to the people in distribution. The people in management talk a different language to the people at the "coalface". Maybe not a different language —but certainly different words.

So NLP was designed to teach people how to tune in to the languages (verbal and non-verbal) of different people in different walks of life. Most good salespeople have an innate talent for this stuff or have studied it in various forms.

The lesson for you is to be aware of your non-verbal communication and that of your potential employer. By all means, read some books or webpages on body language and NLP but the point of this chapter was to give you some tips to help you mentally prepare for an interview.

The whole job application process is a battle of perception. The reality is that you can do the job — you wouldn't be in the interview if you couldn't. So the battle is in the mind — your mind and theirs. It takes more than facts and figures to win this game. They have to LIKE you and you have to like them.

It's not a matter of you'll believe it when you see it — but you'll see it when you BELIEVE it!



How To TELL IF THE INTERVIEW IS GOING OK...

There's a lot of research out there which shows that if the interview has become focused on your PAST, then it's simply about to become a formality and they're not really interested in you. Your potential employer simply doesn't see you as a part of their FUTURE, so they dwell on your past to pass the time.

In a selling situation, it would be similar to a salesperson talking all about their product and how great it is without even asking the customer what their needs are.

Please note I'm not saying don't talk about your past – but make sure there's a balance. You can achieve this balance by asking questions.

All you need to do is ask questions that make a potential employer discuss how your PAST may help them in achieving their goals or outcomes for the vacant job.

You could ask questions like these:

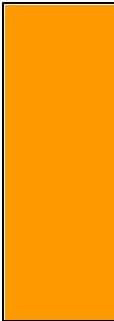
- What are the major frustrations facing your industry/department?
- How do you see my role as a contributing to your company's growth?
- What has disappointed you most about the other you've seen or hired?
- What has impressed you most with the other you've hired?
- What else can I tell you that would make it easy for you to hire me?
- How important is it to hire the right?
- Why is that?
- If you could hire someone that could.... (list the benefits and results you can bring).... what would that mean to your company?
- What's your greatest challenge when hiring staff?
- What other skills would you consider to be valuable for this position?

I've listed these questions not for you to memorize, but to show you how to weave the past few chapters into your interview technique.

Basically, by asking questions you find out the needs of your employer and can then use your past to remove any uncertainty or doubt they may have regarding you and the job.

Most successful salespeople will tell you that the secret to selling is to ask the prospect the right questions. The prospect perceives that the salesperson is more interested in their needs than making a sale. By answering leading questions, the prospect virtually sells themselves on whatever is being sold.

Good salespeople are always looking for **buying signals**. In an interview situation you find these buying signals when the focus shifts from talking about your past to the future. Use facts from your resume to back-up your answers. One of the reasons you are in the interview is for the potential employer to make sure that the stuff in your resume is **true** and not made up to make you look better than you really are.



KNOW WHEN TO RUN

You've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em...

I bring this up because more than a few of our readers have taken positions with companies and then HATED every day they worked there. Many have told me that looking back on these experiences, the warning signs were there in the interview.

In some interviews you will have some moron who has thought up the world's hardest question to ask you.

In a panel interview, you can nearly always expect it from the person who has asked you the least amount of questions so far.

I have a friend who has experienced a few of these questions and this was one of them:

"Suppose you lost the company \$50,000 with an idea you developed and went ahead with, what would you do?"

The smart answer would be to say:

"It would never happen."

The dumb answer would be to take the question seriously and attempt to answer it. Or perhaps you could answer it with:

"Suppose you hired the wrong staff member and they lost the company \$50,000... What would you do?"

A professional interviewer would never ask you a question like that. At least you know how to answer it if you do get asked.

While on this subject, let's look at these two real life examples.

Case 1 - "Sell Me This Pencil"

Here you are in an interview for a sales position and you're handed a pencil and asked to sell it to the interviewer. This question says more about the interviewer and the selling style of the company than what it will ever say about you.

Your choices are:

1. Play their game and sell their pencil back to them.
2. Thank them for their time and leave.

If you like high pressure selling, sell them their stupid pencil. Make sure you ask them qualifying questions first ("Why am I even bothering with this?"). But if you don't like high pressure selling, now's the time to leave.

Case 2

A friend of mine was applying for a sales position for a computer firm. The successful short-listed applicants were called in and instead of being interviewed, they were given a test.

The questions were along the lines of:

"A train leaves X at 30kmh and 15 minutes later a train leaves Y at 25kmh. The distance between the towns is 100km. When will they collide?" (They forgot to add — killing and maiming all the passengers on board.)

Needless to say questions like this are totally irrelevant to the position – unless you're selling ambulances.

My friend who faced this test asked me what I would have done. I would have walked out of the test. Keep in mind, that this was for a sales position for computers for quite a large chain of computer stores. The computer firm has now gone broke.

Sure, their salespeople could tell you when trains would collide, but they couldn't sell computers.

Just recently I received an email from someone who went for a job interview and was asked a question just like the one above. Having read this report, he couldn't believe this was happening to him. And here's how he handled it and was offered the job in the process.

"As soon as they asked me this question, I thanked them for their time and told them I was leaving. They couldn't believe it! They asked me what was wrong and I told them I want to work for a company serious about delivering superior products to the market and you guys want to talk about train crashes.

They said they wanted to see my analytical skills in action so I referred them to my resume and how we designed the software for imaging systems and the math was light years more complicated than working out when trains will crash..."

Talk about taking control.

Don't forget you are there to interview the company as well – and if you don't like the answers to your questions or get a bad feeling about the way they operate, don't be afraid to leave. There are more jobs out there.



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING YOU

Going to an interview is much like going on a date – you’re on your best behavior and you want to say the sort of things that impress the other person. *101 Answers to Tough Interview Questions* are the industry’s equivalent to pick-up lines. But without the benefit of alcohol, the real thing that makes a difference in the interview is to be yourself and give your own answers to questions.

Don’t give answers that you THINK an employer wants to hear.

One of the best examples I saw of this in action was within a documentary filming the development of some major software. The company needed programmers who could bug-test their code, so they turned to the internet. One user on their email list turned in some impressive results, so they asked him to come in for a job interview.

He had to ask his dad for permission because he was only 16. But here's best part:

In the interview the company was worried about him working straight after leaving school, so they asked him what his plans were for the future. He replied "To get the Unix version running faster than the Windows version".

He couldn't care about college, didn't even worry about moving 600 miles from home. He just wanted to write code – the PERFECT person for the job on offer. So they hired him on the spot. You won't find an answer like that in any job interview books.

Interestingly, the way he got the job lends itself perfectly to being yourself – he wasn't competing against thousands of applicants and their resumes. He was part of the company's network of contacts.

Sometimes employers are looking for answers that are different to what the books would tell you.

A large survey was done recently on salespeople in a major city and they were asked how they felt about rejection.

Most replied that they didn't mind, it was part of the process and they didn't take it personally. Interestingly, the TOP salespeople, the people with TALENT for sales, all hated rejection and took it personally.

They felt that any rejection was a sign the client didn't believe them and doubted their integrity. So these TOP salespeople worked extra hard to establish integrity and trust with their clients and as a result they sold more.

Another survey on customer relations within the health sector revealed that the best nurses were the ones that GOT emotionally involved with their patients.

With all that in mind, if you were in an interview for a sales position and were asked a question about how you cope with rejection, you should just be yourself and not give the answer you think they want to hear.

Certainly keep in mind the interviewer's uncertainty so if you give an answer that is a little unconventional, back it up for them and demonstrate why that makes you a good choice for the job.

For example:

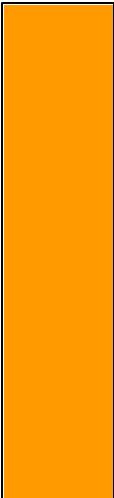
How do you cope with rejection in selling?

"I don't like it at all because it implies they doubt my integrity or my desire to give them the best deal for both of us. So I work hard at building trust and a relationship, which is why I was top salesman at xyz for two years running."

You will also recall a few chapters back that some interviewers will be looking for your top-of-mind or spontaneous responses rather than the content of your responses. So being yourself is also the key to finding a job that suits you and suits them.

Panel Interviews:

The panel interview is like any other interview except there's more people. Don't be put off by that. Use the techniques in this report to answer the questions from all the people on the panel. We tend to focus on the person we find the nicest on panel – this tends to make the others feel left out so be sure to maintain eye contact with all



Do Not Guess or Assume

You've [still] got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em...

You can use questions to control an interview and you can also use them to clarify issues and put the topic BACK onto the employer.

One reader was telling me he applied for an engineering job and was asked during the interview what he thought about CATS. He assumed they were talking about the play which had come to town, but in fact they were talking about C.A.T.S. which was an acronym for a technical piece of software.

If you're not sure where the question is heading, ask "How do you mean?". This can also buy you some time to think about the answer.

Turning the question back on the employer is a great tactic when they ask you questions that are a bit out of your control, especially with questions where the outcome is dependent on knowing details beyond what you were able to research on the company's own policies or culture.

For example: "Where do you want to be in five years' time?" – for this question you can answer:

- I want to be part of a winning team in some sort of management/supervisory position.
- I want to be right where I am when I start with you – that's where my talent is.
- Where CAN I be in five years' time with you guys?

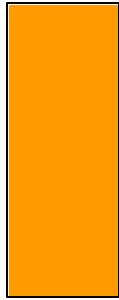
I love the last answer. By putting the question back on the employer, you can use it to uncover a lot of different questions.

Similarly, "When do you expect to be promoted?" can be answered with "What's your policy on promotion?".

The answers they provide to these questions also help you decide if you want to work for the company. If you want a path to promotion and you discover that five years from now you will pretty much be where you were when you started... You may not want the job.

Too often we see people who try to say the things they want an employer to hear. Sometimes if they don't understand a question, instead of asking for clarification, they blurt an answer because they don't want to seem stupid.

Some interviewers actually look to see if people ask for clarification. Their reasoning is that they don't want people making uninformed decisions on the job, so they look for people who aren't afraid to ask questions to get a greater understanding.



THE FUD FACTOR

Potential employers are victims of the F.U.D. factor. As we've discussed, they have Fears, Uncertainties and Doubts as to your abilities.

All their questions are designed to uncover their worst fears about you. They have seen lots of resumes and everyone looks good on paper. They really want to give someone a job so you need to make it easy for them by giving them answers or questions that ease their doubts and fears.

Things interviewers fear:

1. You won't be able to do the job.
2. What you said in your application may not be totally correct.
3. If they hire you, you won't put in a full working day.
4. You may be sick a lot and thus take a lot of time off.
5. You may take the job and stay a few weeks before moving on.
6. You won't get along with other workers.
7. You won't work very hard, or you'll do the minimum required.
8. You won't show initiative and may often need to be told what to do.
9. They'll get in trouble if they hire the wrong person.
10. It will cost them a lot of money to get rid of you if they do hire the wrong person.

So look at this list, and look at your resume to see if there are any things there that may raise concerns. If you've been fired before or perhaps if you're over-qualified for the job, be prepared for questions that investigate these issues.

As we've said previously, many interviewers realize that people don't leave jobs, they leave managers. They also know that people get fired for personal reasons as well as for performance reasons.

Being fired isn't really as big a deal as you think, especially if you can put a positive spin on it. Remember the case of the super-salesman earlier on? He was fired because he annoyed a client, BUT his new manager had put him in that position – a position that didn't suit his TALENT.

Using that in an explanation for his firing would not only remove the doubt but would also reinforce his talent for opening new sales areas.

If you've ever been accused of being over-qualified for a position, tell them they can over-pay you if they want. The underlying concern with this issue is that you will leave them if you get a better offer. You just have to remove that doubt. That's when YOU should ask questions and show them how your past can help them with the outcomes they want to achieve in the future.



THE GREATEST INTERVIEW QUESTION

Are there any other concerns you have about me and this position?

I was going to save this chapter until last, but while I'm talking about questions I guess it's topical to suggest that this chapter's suggestion can turn failure into success.

So – the interview is winding up and you're not sure if they're totally convinced you're the right person for the job. You then ask:

"Are there any other concerns you have about me and the position?"

If they have any concerns, they will tell you and you can deal with them there and then.

Simple, huh?

But I have to tell you it's amazing how many people walk out of the interview wondering how it went and they'll sweat for days by the phone waiting for the employer to call.

Not to mention stressing over if they answered all the employer's concerns or not.

A personnel officer with 20 years' experience told me about this question. It never fails to impress him when he hears an applicant ask it.

He points out that he rarely gets asked though, which is good news for you. It's a great tactic and gives you a huge advantage for getting the job.

The old saying... **You never get a second chance to make a FIRST impression...** is true.

Research has shown that employers have made some sort of decision about you in the first few seconds of seeing you.

So everything your mom said about brushing your hair, not using too much perfume and dressing nicely is true.



WHERE Do WE Go FROM HERE?

Imagine a salesperson doing a great sales pitch on a client.

The client asks tough questions but the salesperson answers them adeptly, addressing the client's concerns. The client is interested and at the end of the sales pitch the salesperson just gets up, shakes hands and leaves. Not only would they lose a potential sale but it's also simply a waste of their time and effort.

In sales parlance, this salesperson is guilty of not *asking for the order*.

And that's EXACTLY what happens in most interviews. The interview goes really well and the candidate simply walks out without asking for the order (so to speak), or at least without finding out what the next step is going to be.

How do we fix this? Simple.

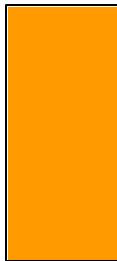
When the interview is over and you've addressed all their concerns and asked all your questions, you simply ask:

"I'm keen to start, where do we go from here?"

Now you find out about how they will contact you and when the second interview might be.

If you're comfortable with this, you can change the question above to be more aggressive and ask *when* you can start.

Either way, for your own sake, get an idea on what the next step is going to be. If there is to be a second interview, find out who else will be involved in the final hiring decision, and ask what sort of issues they would like to address in the next interview so you can prepare yourself for it.



SHOW ME THE MONEY

Someone once told me you never get what you deserve – you get what you negotiate.

The key to any good negotiation is research. You don't want to earn the same money as before (most people want more) so you need to find out how much your position is paying.

There are websites that will show you the industry standards for just about any position and you can add factors like degrees etc. in there to get a better idea on what the job is worth – or should be worth.

Your potential employer isn't going to offer you the maximum they're willing to pay. And you're not going to open with the lowest salary you'll accept.

So obviously, giving a salary history is a real trap and when you get asked "What was your salary in your last job?" – you know you're about to have your negotiating work cut out for you.

If you tell them your old salary and they offer something similar be sure to ask:
“Is that offer negotiable?”

You can always explain that you didn’t leave your last job because they were paying you way too much money.

It may be tempting to fabricate a salary history, but you’d be surprised how one or two phone calls could catch you out. My advice is don’t lie about your past earnings.

Here are some more tips and tricks for getting more money and perks.

You can start your salary negotiations right from the start of your interview. By mentioning the company car or the bonus your department received for making budget or speaking of other examples of demonstrated performance is a great tactic for showing your potential employer what you’re expecting well before you get to the salary negotiation part.

Always ask for a few more thousand than you’re willing to accept (unless the offer is more than you expect, of course). That way, you can come down a bit in price and make them think they’re getting some sort of good deal.

Don’t accept their first offer, either. If they offer you \$45k for the job and you jump in straight away and say you’ll take it, they could well be worried that they offered too much, or that you’re used to earning a lot less than that.

If you don’t mind being a little “creative”, you can say you have an offer from another company and it’s a bit more than what your potential employer is offering – but you really like what you’re hearing from them, etc. Then ask them if they could match the other offer.

The following gives you a fall-back position:

If they say they can’t match the other offer, then you can still accept the job by saying you liked them and the opportunities discussed in the interview and you’d be willing to take the job despite the lower pay being offered.

With all that in mind, another negotiating technique is to ask for 24 hours to consider the offer. Tell them you have offer/s from another company/companies (offering to pay you more) and you would like 24 hours to think it over.

If they agree to this, you know they really want you. You then ring the next day and ask if they could possibly increase their offer by another \$X,000.

The upside is they say "YES" and you've scored a windfall increase in pay. The downside is they may say "NO", in which case you can use the same strategy as above: tell them you like their company and the way they do things and so you would like to join them.

You could always ask for a salary review in a few months as a last ditch negotiating tactic.

If you have a resume that shows a history of "results" like increasing sales or profits or reducing costs, then definitely try to get your salary tied in to any sales increases or cost reductions you can bring the company.

Don't be afraid to point to your resume to back up your claims and to justify the salary you are asking for as well.

I'm still waiting for someone who, when the HR manager says "we offer a competitive salary", replies "that's great, because I offer a competitive work level".

More than one reader has used a twist on this to get a few more thousand added to their salary offer. Here's an approximation of what you say:

"I've researched your firm and I know that the widgets you sell and the services you provide aren't the cheapest on the market. Why is that?" (They will then tell you about their quality and services and expertise and how superior they are to the rest of the market, etc.)

"Well, the same thing applies in my case. I'm not saying that other people can't do my job for less, all I'm saying is that like you, I offer.....(insert here the quality of your skills, experience, etc.)... and I'm always re-learning and improving these skills so that I can be of maximum value to you and your customers.

Keep in mind, though, that if the company is the cheapest on the market in their area, then you're in trouble with the above example.



A BUSINESS SECRET THAT OPENS THE Door

Can I show you how we could increase revenue by at least 11%?

I sort of stumbled on this technique by accident, but if you want to knock your interviewer's socks off then stick with me for the next few pages. It'll be worth it, I promise.

You'll recall that there are only three ways to grow a business:

- 1: Get MORE customers
- 2: Get customers to buy or pay MORE (or increasing profit per sale)
- 3: Get them to do this MORE often.

Let me now show you how to become a highly successful marketing consultant and use the formula above to increase nearly any business by 33%, EASILY! (Again, stick with me on this one and I'll make it worth your while.)

Suppose you had a business with 1,000 customers spending \$10 and doing that ten times a year with you. Your gross sales are \$100,000.

Now here's the key: if you could get just 100 (10%) more customers and do something that got them to spend just \$1 (10%) more and could get them to visit your shop just 1 (10%) more time a year, your business would now have gross sales of \$133,000... OR... stated differently, the business has increased by 33%.

No. of Customers	X	Av Sale	X	Visits per Year	=	Gross Sales
1,000	X	\$10	X	10	=	\$100,000
1,100	X	\$11	X	11	=	\$133,000

Back in my consulting days, I'd walk into the meeting (interview) and armed with little more than a whiteboard and a marker I could land a contract (job). As long as they agreed to my fee (salary), of course... And we'll get to how to handle that later.

Here's what I'd do. I would walk into the meeting and ask questions. The first question would be: "Roughly how many customers do you have?" Then: "What would the average sale be?" Followed by: "How often would your average customer buy from you each year?"

I'd write their responses on the whiteboard and then multiply them together to work out the gross sales – easy.

Then I'd add 10% to their numbers and show them the difference I can help make to the company (the figures in the green area, above).

So basically, increasing each of the three areas (how many; how much; how often) by 10% has equated to a 33% potential increase in sales.

The beauty with this is the three areas work exponentially, so even a 5% increase in just two areas would equate to an 11% increase in sales.

More than that, a 10% increase in each area is much more achievable than a 33% increase in just one area.

Let me show you how readers, just like you, can use this same example to turn the interview into a "stand out" performance.

Imagine you're a mechanic. You've been called in for an interview and you ask the interviewer if it would be OK to have a whiteboard and marker in the room, because you have something very interesting to show them. Not many mechanics would be asking for that. The interview is going OK and you then request permission to ask a few questions. You say:

"I think I have some ideas and ways that my skills and experience can help grow this business by 11%. Would it be OK if I showed you how?"

Now here's the key – because you, the mechanic, have thought about how the job fits into this "3 Ways" equation, you say something like this:

"How many customers do you have? What's the average sale? And how often do your customers service their cars with you each year?"

"I realise you want more than a mechanic, you need someone who understands your customers and your business. So you need a mechanic who can get your customers telling their friends about the incredible repair and service they enjoyed with your company. And if JUST one customer in 20 told a friend about us and that friend became a customer, we've got 5% more customers."

But you haven't finished there...

"Because of my experience in other auto shops, I think I can help reduce some of your costs, or perhaps we could put our prices up... But in any case, if we could get just 5% more for a service (which is roughly \$5) and you multiply that by the 5% increase in customers then we would have grown the service department's gross sales by 11%."

"What do you think?"

Imagine the response from the interviewer?

The interviewer is looking around for their socks, and YOU have just turned the interview totally around and YOU now control it. Interestingly, the example above used a 5% increase in just two of the three key areas to grow a business.

You can use your resume to show you have the skills to do the job but now, instead of answering stupid interview questions, you are focusing on the real issues: **what you can contribute to the business.**

The important thing here is you are not saying you can grow the business, you're simply pointing out you know the fundamentals of the business and want to be part of the solution in making the business grow. You are simply using this to stand out from the crowd.

Important Note: You need to sit down and work out how your job contributes to any of these three growth areas and get comfortable with working the numbers. Your interviewer may not give you a whiteboard, but you can doodle it all out on a cocktail napkin if you have to.

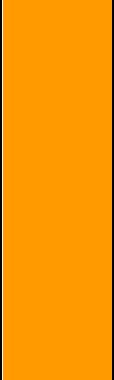
Also, your interviewer may not be able to provide you with the customer numbers or average sale, etc. (which says something) so be prepared to provide an hypothetical example or an example using a previous employer (bearing in mind confidentiality issues).

Fundamentally, what you are trying to do here is to show them you understand the language and function of business.

Another Important Note: The reason I spent the last two pages telling you about this strategy is because it WORKS. It really makes you different to the rest. Sure, you may have to sit down and put some effort into making this strategy suit you and your job. You, of course, don't have to follow my advice and you can make it much harder than it has to be to get that job... You always have a choice.

Yet Another Important Note: This strategy is so powerful that we have decided to release more notes on it on our website for readers that want to take the opportunity to educate themselves further.

Take a look at <http://www.job-interview-magic.com/supersize.htm>



BE SURE TO SAY... THANK YOU

Every interview book says to send a “thank you” letter.

What they don’t tell you is that you need to **re-sell yourself** in your thank you letter.

Some readers like to take notes in an interview. They use these notes to revue the interview and to write a thank you letter that picks up on some of the key points discussed in the interview.

You can then use these key points in your letter and take some examples from your resume or discussions in the interview to emphasize your ability to do the job.

The letter on the next page demonstrates this...

Dear Jane,

Thanks for taking the time out to interview me for the position. I have been thinking about your company's plans for and it should be a breath of fresh air for you and your customers. My experience in x,y,z could really help you achieve your goals. I'd like to quickly point out some other talents I have which we didn't get time to discuss:

Change Management:

I was responsible for my previous department's change to new systems which involved controlling all the logistics associated with that.

Staff Training:

Although I didn't have an official training title, I was responsible for teaching new staff how to operate x, y, z and reduced AHT to x minutes. This saved \$x0,000 over the year.

Once again, thank you for speaking with me and I look forward to your call on Tuesday.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Langley

So even though the interview is over, a thank you letter helps push you forward as an eligible candidate.

If the interview revealed a weakness in a certain skill or experience, you can use the thank you letter to introduce another skill that may be closely related to help offset that weakness.

For example, management and supervision are closely related. If a candidate was weak in direct management skill experience, they could emphasize their supervision skills in the thank you letter to offset that lack of experience.

A thank you letter now becomes a powerful tool instead of a way to suck-up to an employer.

In closing, the only other thing I can offer you is this: GOOD LUCK – but I'm sure you won't be needing it.